



March 6, 2013

To: House Judiciary Committee
From: Kristy McFetridge, Executive Director, HAVEN in Bozeman, MT
Re: SB 306 sponsored by Senator Olson – Revise Partner Family Member Assault Laws

HAVEN appreciates the opportunity to be able to submit a written testimony in support of SB 306. My name is Kristy McFetridge and I am the Executive Director of HAVEN in Bozeman, MT. HAVEN was founded in 1979 and we provide emergency shelter, legal advocacy, counseling, support groups, a 24-hour crisis line, education, and support services to victims of domestic and sexual violence. We strongly support Senate Bill 306 sponsored by Senator Olson.

SB 306 would amend the existing PFMA statute to remove the language “persons of the opposite sex”. This change is vitally important.

- Changing the PFMA statute to include all members of our community is critical. Without this change, violent offenders in our community will continue to be treated differently because they are abusing someone of the same sex, this is unacceptable. We believe that all Partner Family Member Assaults should be treated equally regardless of the sex of individuals involved in the assault. All members in our community need the law to provide protection for them from violence, and accountability for all members who commit violent crimes. In our community we have same sex couples with children. We believe SB 306 is critical to provide protection for children and the parents of these children who are exposed to, or experience, domestic and sexual violence.
- The current law is unconstitutional and must be changed in order to maintain the integrity of the existing law.
- Holding offenders equally accountable in both same sex and opposite sex relationships is essential for the intervention and prevention of domestic and sexual violence. We must have legislation and a justice system that will send a clear message to offenders that domestic and sexual violence will not be tolerated in our community. Clarity and consistency in justice system will protect individuals, children, and families in Montana.

Thank you for your time and attention to this important issue. I strongly urge you to vote **YES on SB 306**. If you have questions, I am available to provide further information.

Sincerely,

Kristy McFetridge
Executive Director